

Member Profile

A Miata Biography - Meet the Collings!

by Gary and Kathy Collings

Our very first car in 1964 was a mixed blessing -- a year old 1963 Triumph TR3B roadster. It was red with a white top, side curtains, tonneau cover and racing stripes. For newlyweds it provided a love-hate relationship that would serve as an early "road test" for our marriage. We loved it the day we brought it home but our parents thought it to be a somewhat homely design and none too practical for a struggling college student and an underemployed spouse. Unfortunately, we could not afford the continual cost of upkeep and traded it for a new 1968 VW bug. Twenty-seven long years later, after the old dog died and our second son was (almost) out of college, we acquired a new 1995 Merlot Mica M-edition!

Our two sons were in college in the 1990s when Kathy was driving a Mazda. The auto salesman at the dealership knew that we coveted



the ownership of a Miata. Each spring the salesman would call Gary to try to entice him to come to the showroom to view the new models. Gary would resist each year's invitation by telling him that one son had graduated and the other one was a freshman -- call in

four years -- call in three years.... After our annual telephone call in the Spring of 1995, at the end of our son's second year in college, we decided to go to the dealership lot early on a Saturday morning just to check out the inventory before the salesman arrived. With no intention to buy for a couple of more years due to college tuition, we confidently embarked on what we thought was to be a window shopping journey. Well, lo and behold, as we pulled into the lot on April 15, 1995, the first car we saw was this gorgeous Merlot blocking our path. Kathy's immediate words were something to the effect, "I think we are in deep do-do!" We impatiently waited until the salesman arrived at 9:00 AM and drove the Merlot home around noon. The most difficult part of the transaction was wishing our son good luck on acquiring tuition payments for his final two years of college.

The salesman had a worn copy of the Indy Miata Club membership form under his desk blotter, which Gary mailed the next day. The first rally that month was something called a "Fussin' and Cussin'", which Kathy could not attend so Gary set out by himself. Upon arrival, he was welcomed and queried by the Bobs (Wiley and McCoy) about his lack of a navigator. As he naively left the parking lot with his set of instructions, he overheard them chuckle something like "we'll never see him again."

We drove the Merlot for six years accumulating over 60,000 miles of fun and fellowship throughout Indiana and the USA. In the summer of 2001, we acquired a 2000 Mahogany Mica special edition. Before we sold the Merlot, we switched the BBS rims onto the Mahogany for nostalgic reasons, which is the only modification on the Mahogany besides a mounting plate for our CB antenna.

On our long week-end tours, CB radios are a well used communication link. Our "handle" is Indy Gator. If pressed for the name of the car, Gary will divulge it to be Rhinogator, termed after the meanest animal in the

world. Sometime, when we are in a pub, he might be enticed with a drink offer to tell the joke behind the name of our car.

Although the Miata is garaged for several months each winter, we count it as a slow summer if we do not log at least 10,000 miles. Over the years, we have attended six national meets including Cleveland, Atlanta, Poconos, Dallas, Daytona, and Ottawa as well as the Midwest Gathering in Cincinnati. Some of our memorable long weekend Miata getaways include: Deals Gap, Field of Dreams, Door County in Wisconsin, Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Memphis and Graceland, and LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

Gary served as president of the Indy Miata Club during 1999. Along with membership in the Indy Club, we are now members of four other clubs (Windy City, Lake Effect, Lake Dunes, Greater Cincinnati) as well as the local British Car Club. From the activities of these various clubs, we have attended numerous mingles, rallies, and overnight tours. We have journeyed on roads less traveled, viewed scenery beyond description, and made untold numbers of new acquaintances and friends along the way. Our favorite vacation to date was a seven days cruise in the Caribbean with nine other Miata couples on the Voyager of the Seas.

In December 2003, we will celebrate our 40th wedding anniversary. We have three children (Graig and his wife, Krista, and Dayne) and two grandchildren (Camden and Cylar). We collect oak antique furniture, lace linens, depression glass, flashlights, matchbooks, commemorative stamp kits, state quarters and 1976 coins. Kathy is a real estate broker, corporate trainer and former manager with the F. C. Tucker Company. Gary has been a school district administrator and is currently a manager of an educational project affiliated with Indiana State University.

What's the story about your Miata? We know you have one, and we'd love to hear it. Send it to our membership director, Melissa Forbes.